

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15  
CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01  
/064 W

-----171654Z 067908 /53

P R 171611Z JAN 77  
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5513  
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY RABAT  
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 0379

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT TS  
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA'S RETURN

REF: TUNIS 0336

1. JANUARY 15 PRESS TREATMENT OF BOURGUIBA'S RETURN  
TO TUNIS ON PREVIOUS DAY (SEE REFTEL) EMPHASIZED  
HIS EXPRESSIONS OTLDLWART FOR PRIME MINISTER HEDI  
NOUIRA, WITH ONLY SEMI-INDEPENDENT LE TEMPS  
HEADLINGING HIS STATEMENT THAT HE NEEDED  
REST. ALL PAPERS CARRIED TEXT OF HIS ARRIVAL STATEMENT  
BUT WN A "SANITIZED" VERSION. NO NOTE WAS TAKEN OF  
BOURGUIBA'S EMOTIONAL STATE AND HIS REMARKS ABOUT HAVING  
HAD A "ONE-WAY TICKET" TO SWITZERLAND AND THE UNITED STATES  
WERE DELETED. HE ATTRIBUTED HIS CURRENT PHYSICAL STATE  
TO EXTREME FATIGUE CAUSED BY VISITS TO RURAL GOVERNORATES  
IN EARLY 1976 AND TO THE FUNERAL OF HIS COUSING HEDI KHEFACHA  
WHO DIED LAST MAY. PRESS GAVE NO INDICATION OF WHAT EFFECT  
BOURGUIBA'S NEED FOR REST WOULD HAVE ON HIS PERFORMING  
HIS DUTIES AS CHIEF OF STATE. BOURGUIBA SAID ONLY THAT  
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HE RELIES ON HEDI NOUIRA AND HIS COLLABORATORS.

2. WHILE THE NEWSPAPER VERSION OF BOURGUIBA'S REMARKS  
WAS EDITED, MOST TUNISIAN EITHER HEARD HIM ON THE RADIO  
LIVE OR SAW HIS REMARKS ON TELEVISION THAT EVENING. HIS  
LABORED VOICE AND HAGGARD APPEARANCE WERE EVIDENT TO ALL  
TUNISIANS WITH WHOM WE HAVE SPOKEN. IT ALSO EVIDENT THAT

MOST TUNISIANS WERE DEEPLY MOVED BY BOTH HIS APPEARANCE AND BY HIS STATEMENT THAT DOCTORS HAD TOLD HIM HE MUST LEAVE RUNNING OF COUNTRY TO YOUNGER MEN HE HAD TRAINED. WHILE TUNISIANS WERE STUNNED BY BOURGUIBA'S APPEARANCE, MANY TAKE CONSOLATION IN THE FACT THAT HE IS ON HIS FEET, BACK IN TUNISIA, AND ON BASIS HIS REMARKS, HOWEVER GLOOMY, THINKING LUCIDLY.

3. FOLLOWING PRESIDENT'S RETURN, MINISTER OF INTERIOR TAHAR BELKHODJA, WHO HAS RECEIVED UNUSUALLY HEAVY PRESS COVERAGE IN LAST FEW DAYS, SPOKE TO A MEETING OF THE "DESTOURIAN LEADERSHIP" OF TUNIS. HE TOLD THIS GROUP OF 400 THAT " WE ARE AT A TURNING POINT IN THE LIFE OF THE NATION WHICH DEMANDS A NEW VISION OF PROBLEMS AND A NEW APPROACH CAPABLE OF GUARANTEEING THE FUTURE." HE SAID PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA HAD THAT DAY CALLED ON FAITHFUL DESTOURIANS "TO ASSUME THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES, ALL THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES." HE CALLED THE PSD A CRUCIBLE IN WHICH ALL INITIATIVES AND ALL GOOD INTENTIONED EFFORTS OUGHT TO BE COMBINED. HE WARMLY PRAISED THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT FOR ITS LEADERSHIP IN NATIONAL AFFAIRS, ITS PRESCIENCE IN SUPPORTING SOCIAL JUSTICE AND BELKHODJA SAID ITS POSITION IN SOCIETY OUGHT TO BE CONSOLIDATED.

4. WE UNDERSTAND THAT BOURGUIBA WILL REMAIN IN TUNIS FOR A FEW DAYS AND THEN MOVE TO HIS SUMMER PALACE IN MONASTIR FOR FURTHER REST. THIS WOULD REMOVE HIM FROM IMMEDIATE CONTACT WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS IN TUNIS WHILE FACILITATING PERIODIC MEETINGS WITH NOUIRA IN WHICH THE

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PRIME MINISTER "KEEPS HIM ABREAST" OF THE AFFAIRS OF STATE. THIS MOVE WOULD ENHANCE NOUIRA'S ROLE IN A "TRANSITION PERIOD" AND STRENGTHEN HIS STATURE AS BOURGUIBA'S RIGHTFUL SUCCESSOR. TAHAR BELKHODJA, HOWEVER, APPEARS TO BELIEVE THAT HE HAS A SPECIAL MANDATE AS WELL IN THE PERIOD AHEAD WHICH ENTITLES HIM TO MAKE IMPORTANT STATEMENTS ABOUT THE POLITICAL SYSTEM.

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** PRESIDENT, PRESS COMMENTS, POLITICAL STABILITY  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Sent Date:** 17-Jan-1977 12:00:00 am  
**Decaption Date:** 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1977TUNIS00379  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
**Film Number:** D770017-0007  
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**Office:** ACTION NEA  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
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**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
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**Reference:** 77 TUNIS 336  
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**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**SAS ID:** 3577539  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA'S RETURN  
**TAGS:** PINT, OVIP, TS, (BOURGUIBA, HABIB)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
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